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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a historical view of the development of special education for New Zealand's students with learning difficulties. The paper uses a chronological approach, beginning with special provisions for deaf and blind students, followed by examination of: the impact of a national standards method of classifying and promoting pupils; the standards system as a cause of learning failure; attempts to modify the standards system; special provisions for mentally defective students; the continuing problem of learning failure; an awakening of interest in child study in the early 1900s; the adverse effects of the grading system; overly large classes and mass instruction; the development of special education; identification of some students as "intelligent non-intellectuals"; influence of universities; developments in government policy; student rights; and development of support services. The paper takes the view that judging New Zealand's accomplishments in educating special needs students requires consideration of such matters as understanding the nature and purpose of education current at the time, the extent of the teaching force and its degree of professionalism, the economic climate, and similar matters. (JDD)

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EDUCATIONAL PROVISION IN NEW ZEALAND FOR CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

An Historical Outline

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An Historical Outline

Arthur E. Fieldhouse

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for Educational Research
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INTRODUCTION

During the earliest years of our national system of education it was recognized, officially, that too many children were failing. Attempts were made to remedy the situation - to provide for the educational needs of those with learning difficulties. Since then we have continued to recognise that special provision for children who are unable to make normal progress in learning in the regular classroom is needed. In fact we have become more aware of it and to-day there is not only wide-ranging and varied provision for these children but also strong pressure to extend the provisions.

Looking back over the hundred odd years it has taken to achieve the present provisions, critics may consider the State to have been grudging, parsimonious, and unsympathetic, reluctant to provide for the particular needs of a relatively small group of children for whom there was no great public concern. Progress may not have been rapid and extensive. To judge that, however, one must take into consideration such matters as the understanding of the nature and purpose of education current at the time, the extent of the teaching force and its degree of professionalism, the economic climate, and many similar matters. Indeed, if such matters are considered it becomes questionable whether the State can fairly be accused of being tardy or wilfully neglectful.

SPECIAL PROVISION FOR THE DEAF AND THE BLIND

The first special provision made by the State was for the deaf and the blind. No doubt it was seen to be indisputable that if education were to be free and compulsory (as the 1877 Act required) special provision for these children would have to be made. The State acknowledged this responsibility reasonably quickly. Within two years of the Act an "institution for the education and training of deaf-mutes" had been established (1880) at Sumner. However it should be noted that the reluctance of parents to use the facility led to the inclusion in the 1901 School Attendance Act of the requirement that the parents of deaf children, along with the parents of blind children, were '...to provide efficient and suitable education for such children.' Parents failing to do so would commit an offence in terms of the Act. Further, the Department of Education was empowered to subsidize or pay in full the cost of institutional care - a clear acknowledgement of State responsibility.

Achieving special provision for blind children was, however, more protracted. In 1890 it was reported: 'The number of blind children is still, happily, to small to justify the establishment of a school in New Zealand for their special instruction.' (A to J, 1890, E-1, p.xiii) Whether this meant that there were, in fact, very few blind children, or that very few parents of blind children were demanding help, or that the parents of blind children could afford special educational facilities for them without state help, is not clear. Meantime the State had accepted some responsibility by wholly or partly maintaining some such children in Australian institutions for the blind. In 1889, seven were in Melbourne and two in Sydney; in 1890, ten in Melbourne and three in Sydney, the payments being made through the Colonial Secretary's Department.

By 1891, however, a school for the blind (later to become the Jubilee Institute for the Blind, Auckland) had been established in Auckland by a newly founded society. Accordingly the blind children wholly or partly maintained at State expense in Australia were, it was reported in 1892, brought back, seven of them joining eight who had already been entered at the new school. The expenses were, if not recovered from the parents, met by the Charitable

Aid Department but subsequently by the Education Department.

In view of the multiplicity of pressing problems inevitably arising at that time from the establishing of a free, compulsory and secular education system on a national scale, the special provision for the deaf and the blind could perhaps be regarded as a notable achievement. But were there not other groups of children with special educational needs? Was there not already evidence of learning failure serious enough to warrant further special provision?

EARLY EVIDENCE OF SERIOUS DEGREE OF LEARNING FAILURE

Objective evidence of a serious degree of learning failure was provided, from the earliest years of the national system, by the "standards" method of classifying and promoting pupils, used throughout the country.

Subjectively determined and detailed syllabuses of study were prescribed, each being the "standard" of work to be achieved for its particular year of school attendance, there being six such standards - the still familiar Standards 1 to 6. Thus, a child was not promoted into, and classified in, say Standard 2 until he could pass the whole syllabus (or standard) for Standard 1. Annual examinations for such purposes were conducted by school ispectors, the results being reported to the Department for incorporation in national statistical tables.

The standards system had been adopted as a means of ensuring a nationally uniform standard of achievement, and also of providing all children with an equal educational opportunity, in sharp contrast to the extraordinary variation in educational opportunity from province to province when the provincial authorities had provided education. It was adopted, too, as an instrument of accountability, a means of checking that value was being obtained for the money being supplied for education from the national purse.

The Department's annual statistical tables of the "standards" examination results certainly did not prove reassuring in any respect. Amongst other matters they gave alarming evidence of the serious extent to which children were failing to move forward, year by year, through the standard classes, and so constituted an index of learning failure. Perhaps the most striking such evidence concerned the extent of, and the annual

increase in, the number of pupils who failed to achieve the minimum standard of attainment required for Standard 1. In 1881, after the national system had been operating for four years, 45.77% of the children enrolled were classified below Standard 1. In 1882 the percentage had risen to 46.67; in 1883 it had reached 49.8.

The significance of this and of other evidence from the statistical tables was recognized by, and was of concern to, the education authorities. Plagued by other difficulties their response, unfortunately, was to tinker with the standards system as a chief means of remedying the learning failure.

POOR PROSPECTS FOR IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE REMEDIAL ACTION

With hindsight we can nowadays regard the Department's approach to the remedying of the demonstrated learning failure as having been too narrow, ignoring the now well established principle of multiple causation of learning failure. However, the Department was faced with other problems, no doubt then considered more urgent - the immediate and mammoth task of establishing and administering a national system about which there was still controversy and some hostility; making the standards system work; securing regular school attendance, to mention but a few. Such problems which would not go away preoccupied the Department. Accordingly there was little opportunity for remedying the admitted learning failure other than through the adapting of the standards system which, after all, had not been long in use.

The Education Boards, too, though concerned by the degree of learning failure, were faced with urgent problems, trying to stretch finance to meet the demanding needs for school buildings and teaching staff, attacking the problem of irregular attendance which was making serious inroads into their incomes.

In judging the response of the teachers it must be remembered that they were ill prepared professionally. In general they received little professional leadership from the inspectors whose time was absorbed in inspecting and examining duties and, in fact, in policing the system. Furthermore the teachers were under intense pressure from the standards system, particularly to gain a high pass rate from their pupils. The system concentrated their attention on that as a teacher's chief function. A high

pass rate had to be achieved, whatever the means. It was regarded as an indication of professional skill and success. Accordingly, it became the important determinant of job security and promotion. However, this intense pressure did lead teachers ultimately to see that their professional survival depended on the achieving of better conditions of service.

What, then, of the parents? Was the special provision for children failing to learn in the regular classroom not an urgent matter? Many parents, establishing their farms and other forms of livelihood, were under economic pressure that could be eased by child labour. Consequently they often saw no great virtue in education, especially when it required regular attendance at school. Furthermore, occupational and employment prospects had not yet come to be seriously affected by the extent and nature of one's education. In many sections of the community, then, education was not regarded as indispensable, even if desirable. Strong evidence for this is to be seen in the fact that it was not until the School Attendance Act of 1901 that the ineffective and laxly operated compulsory attendance clauses of the 1877 Act were transformed into operable law compelling age specific school attendance.

In this early period, then, the prospects for making special provision for children with learning difficulties were almost negligible; and it was predictable that the relatively few attempts to do so would be restricted to tinkering with the recently introduced standards system.

THE STANDARDS SYSTEM AS A CAUSE OF LEARNING FAILURE

Since the character of the standards system and its practical application was undoubtedly the single, most pervasive and intractable cause of learning difficulty, its main features must now be considered if the attempts to adapt it are to be appreciated.

In laying down the prescription for, or the standard to be achieved in, a particular class as the criterion for promotion to the next class, the system allowed no exceptions or variations. There was no place for the adjusting of learning material and of teaching methods to the ability and interests of a particular pupil. Moreover, inspectors were instructed to apply standards most strictly. Thus: '...the demands made by the standards should be rigorously exacted. They are to be taken as "representing the

minimum of attainments of which the Inspector will expect evidence at each stage of a scholar's progress "(See Regulation 6); and they ought to be passed in such a way as to indicate that the candidate could, without much difficulty, do better work than is demanded of him at the examination.' (A to J, 1880, E-1, H-1A, p.14)

Not surprisingly, many children remained stranded in a class the standard for which they could not master, fruitlessly repeating it year after year. Commenting on this the Auckland Board, in its 1895 report wrote: 'Some of the scholars have been over the work prescribed for Standard 6 three, or even four, times, and their presence in the class is detrimental to those who are for the first time preparing for that standard, besides often being an embarrassment to the teachers. The Board hopes that something may be done to remedy these objections.' (A to J, 1895, E-1, p.60) The effect on the chronic repeaters themselves, if appreciated, does not appear to have been mentioned. However, a more sympathetic view was expressed by the president of the North Canterbury Branch of the N.Z.E.I. at the 1899 annual meeting. 'At present the school life of many children is not a happy one. It is made up of continual efforts to reach the unattainable, under teachers whose very livelihood depends on their ability to force their unhappy charges to reach a certain goal within a certain period.' (N.Z.J. Edn, 1899, vol.1, no.1, p.55)

This brief reference to the standards system will suffice to indicate that far from avoiding or alleviating learning difficulties the standards system predisposed children to them. The requirement that the whole syllabus for a given standard was to be passed indicated no recognition of, or provision for, specific backwardness. The only remedy for failure was the repetition of the work the child had already demonstrated his failure to master. By attending regularly, by being diligent and attentive, by working hard, it was apparently believed that the standard prescription could be mastered and success achieved.

There were, however, some teachers and not a few inspectors (at that time officers within the Department) who, for a variety of reasons, criticized the standards system sharply. Such criticism continued through the remaining years of the century until, in 1899, there were amendments that, on the surface at least, appeared to provide some improvements. To begin with,

however, the Department had reacted to this criticism, and to the disturbing evidence in its statistical tables, by tinkering with the standards system rather than by radically adapting it or by abandoning it.

EARLY ATTEMPTS TO MODIFY THE STANDARDS SYSTEM

The Department's first step - and a sensible one - had been to check whether the information provided by the statistical tables accurately represented the real situation. Thus, by 1884 the Department had required that all children on a school roll must be presented for examination, not just those selected by the teacher. Though giving a more accurate indication of the situation, this did not make it any less serious.

In the following year, 1885, the original rigidity of the standards was for the first time somewhat relaxed. In a regulation on 'Inspection of Schools and Standards of Education' (A to J, 1885, E-1, p.114) the earlier requirements for the passing of a standard were repeated, but with this qualification: '...except that failure in one subject (unless very serious) may be overlooked if in the judgment of the Inspector it is due to some individual peculiarity, and is not the result of, the pupil's negligence or of ineffective teaching.' Unfortunately this concession does not appear to have had much effect, if any, in practice. Nevertheless its reference to 'some individual peculiarity' does suggest an official awareness of, and provision for, specific backwardness as we now understand it. But teachers were ill prepared, and not yet self-confident enough, to use the degree of freedom thus offered.

The shadow of the inspector's examination and the grip of the standards system remained in effect unchanged until 1894 when the Minister announced: 'An important experiment with respect to the standard examinations is about to be made. In Standards 1 and 2, the examination for pass is to be intrusted to the teachers, in order that Inspectors may have more time to devote to work of inspection as distinguished from examination. This change, with some others, is being made on the recommendation of the Inspectors of Schools...' (A to J, 1894, E-1, p.vi)

At first, many teachers felt so unprepared for such responsibility that they asked the inspectors to continue to conduct these examinations, or to

check their decisions, or to assist by supplying examination questions! However, two important advances had been made. Firstly it had been tacitly recognized that the teachers, from their more intimate knowledge of the children, could make better judgments of fitness for promotion than could inspectors. Secondly the role of the inspector was being broadened from policeman to professional adviser. Released from the examining of Standards 1 and 2 the inspectors would have, it was intended, time to help and advise teachers with their teaching. Thus some degree of opportunity had been provided, whether it was to be taken or not, for preventing and remedying learning difficulty, through the improved teaching to be achieved from the advice and guidance of the inspectors.

These modifications did not, however, quieten the criticism and the unrest. In 1899 the Wanganui Board called for a conference. It was attended by members of nine of the thirteen Boards, by the inspectors from the Boards represented, and by representatives of various branches of the N.Z.E.I. It is noteworthy that the Minister, in his opening address, asked for an expression of opinion on, amongst other matters, head teachers being given a greater amount of freedom in examining and classifying their pupils, and on the abolition of the individual standard pass. (A to J, 1900, E-1, p.ix) On these matters the critics of the then current practices had already received much support from the example of Gt Britain where, in 1897, the individual examining of children by inspectors had, to all intents and purposes, been abandoned.

As on some other matters the conference was not unanimous on these two. Nevertheless the extent of the agreement was considered sufficient to warrant the gazetting of new regulations in December 1899. They included some with significant implications for the educating of slow and backward learners.

Thus, whilst an annual individual standard pass examination was to remain it was to be conducted for Standards 1 to 5 inclusive by the head teacher, the inspector to continue to examine Standard 6 and to have the authority to examine other pupils '...to guard against the danger of marked inefficiency in the teaching of a school or of a class.' (A to J, 1900, E-1, p.x) It was stressed that '...this annual examination [of Standard 6] is not an examination for the purpose of classification, but for that of assigning certification...' (loc.cit., p.x)

Critics who questioned teachers having responsibility for classification

were reminded that '...the teacher may be guided in his classification by all that he knows of the children's ability and proficiency, and not merely by the results of one examination in the year.' Having taught the child throughout the year, and knowing his strengths and weaknesses the teacher, it was argued, could hardly be questioned as the proper person to determine his classification. Furthermore, authority was now given for putting a pupil in different classes for different subjects according to his ability and proficiency, except that he was to be in the same class for all the English subjects - reading, spelling and dictation, writing and composition. (loc.cit., p.ix)

Also, it was to be possible to promote children more quickly than annually if they made better than average progress, whilst for children making slower progress to spend a longer time in a class than the average child was expected to do. 'The removal of the supposed necessity of hurrying all pupils through the same compulsory amounts of work in the same time should give considerable relief to the conscientious teacher, and leave him free to teach, in the highest sense of the word.' (loc.cit., pp.ix-x)

As in the 1894 amendments it was again pointed out that inspectors would now have time to give more attention '...as experts to the wider issues of school work and organization, that they will now have time to visit more frequently schools that need their help, and to assist teachers in the improvement of the methods of instruction and of the management of the schools. The work of the Inspector, in short, will be qualitative rather than quantitative; he will influence the character of the teaching instead of attempting to measure the amount of knowledge possessed by each individual child.' (loc.cit., p.x)

To these encouraging sentiments was added the hope, expressed to the sceptical and those who had not yet been converted by the example of Gt Britain, that they '...may yet come to see that the atmosphere of liberty is the only one in which true teaching can thrive, and may give the new system a fair trial.' (loc.cit., p.x)

Altogether, then, the 1899 regulations constituted a major advance for the times, relaxing the rigidity of the standards system to a great extent, making possible (if only indirectly) better opportunities for teachers wishing to provide for children with learning difficulties or for those whose achievement was unusually high. In these respects official recognition had,

then, been given to the importance of individual differences since differing rates of promotion determined by differing rates of progress were now to be permitted. Until now the need to provide equal opportunity in education appears to have been regarded as met by providing an equal exposure to one and the same form of education, and the opportunity to take from it what one could. No doubt the rationale was that the State had at least given to those who did not take much or anything positive from the education system, the same opportunity as those who had benefitted. But now the newly approved promotion practices clearly involved recognition of and some provision for individual differences.

Important, too, was the recognition of the professionalism of teachers in that they were now considered able to examine and classify their pupils in the first five standards. Furthermore a change of emphasis from the quantitative to the qualitative aspects of school work was expected since inspectors, freed from much examining, could help improve the quality of teaching in the schools.

Unfortunately these promising amendments to the regulations achieved very little change indeed, largely owing to the extensive powers the inspectors retained and to the teachers lacking the confidence and preparation to implement them. Thus, the inspectors could reverse a head teacher's decisions on the classification of the pupils in the first five standards, and on the placing of a particular pupil in different classes for different subjects. Indeed the head teachers were encouraged to examine each class periodically and show the examination papers and results to the inspectors. In many respects, then, the schools did not change.

George Hogben, who had been appointed Inspector-General in 1899, was critical of the standard pass and of the narrow and rigid character of the school syllabus. However, it was not until 1904 that, following a number of conferences designed to prepare the way, he introduced further regulations and a syllabus of an entirely new nature. Once again authority for the classification in the first five standards was to be the head teacher's. It was to be based chiefly on the results of 'periodic examinations' in English and arithmetic. For these two subjects, too, children could be differently classified, but not by a difference of more than one standard. Furthermore it was specifically provided that the traditional annual external examination of every child for a standard pass was to cease, except for Standard 6. In

respect of the examination and standard pass system Hogben had put into effect his opinions: 'Slavery to formal examination tests has perhaps been one of the greatest obstacles to progress and accordingly should be guarded against in the future.' (A to J, 1899, E-1, p.vii)

So far as the new syllabus was concerned it had much of help for the slow and backward learners. As Ewing observed: 'It countered the over-bookishness of nineteenth century education by stressing first-hand observation and oral words as a means of drawing school life and the children's environment closer together, and it gave much attention to practical work.' (Ewing, J.L.: The Development of the Primary School Curriculum 1877-1970, Wellington, N.Z.C.E.R., 1970, p.108) Moreover teachers were to be able to plan their own courses.

The hostile reception of the syllabus in some quarters, the reasons therefor, and the time it took for it to be widely accepted will not be examined here. Suffice it to say that the 1904 regulations and syllabus provided some further means, if minimally and indirectly, of improving the lot of the slow and backward learners.

SPECIAL PROVISION FOR THE MENTALLY DEFECTIVE

About this time - the turn of the century - attention was being drawn to the need for special educational facilities for the mentally defective. Much of the credit for this must go to the teachers, the most progressive of whom had, for some time, been seeking special help for these children. Thus, at the 1901 annual meeting of the N.Z.E.I. it was resolved: 'That, as medical science has proved conclusively that intellectual dullness frequently arises from physical causes, easily removed, the Government be asked to make provision for the medical examination, but not necessarily treatment of any scholar the head teacher deems to be thus afflicted.' (N.Z.J. Edn, 1901, vol.II, no.22, p.249) Whilst we now know this statement to be unduly optimistic regarding the causes of intellectual dullness it indicates an awareness of, and called attention to, a particular condition for which special provision was needed.

At the same time there was a questioning, by more progressive teachers, of the longstanding recipe for the remedying of learning failure - repetition,

diligence, regular attendance, concentration, and determination, the eradication of laziness and carelessness. Symptomatic of this scepticism was the view expressed by the N.Z.E.I. president (B.G.W. Murray) at the 1903 annual meeting. Allowing that inattention and carelessness could cause dullness and stupidity, he nevertheless claimed that to try to check them by punishment would not only defeat its own end but would deaden interest and exclude knowledge, causing hatred rather than love of knowledge.

In the following year this theme was developed in an article, 'Plea for the Dull Boy,' in the New Zealand Journal of Education. It branded courses of instruction for the so-called 'average pupil' as a grievous defect of the school system since there was no average pupil. Rigidity of methods of instruction was not progress, let alone education. It was the duty of the school '...to take consideration and humane account of [the dull boy's] defects, as far as practicable, with the more fortunate pupils.'

That year, too, the N.Z.E.I. resolved at its annual meeting: 'That it is desirable and imperative that schools and asylums be established for children mentally weak. That this Institute would urge the Premier, as Minister of Education, to establish such schools without delay.' (N.Z.J. Edn, 1904, vol.V, no.55, p.247) Here, then, was official N.Z.E.I. policy to secure special provision for the mentally defective, as had already been done for the deaf and the blind, and to do so similarly in institutions separate from the regular State primary schools.

While the N.Z.E.I. was following up its initiative, powerful support was to be given its representations by the Inspector-General of Schools (George Hogben) as a result of his findings during an oversea visit in 1907. Accordingly the Otekaike School for mentally retarded boys was opened in 1908, whereas it was not until 1916 that a similar school for girls was established at Richmond.

For town children of similar intellectual status who could be satisfactorily managed at home, it was proposed to provide 'special' day classes attached to the regular local primary schools, and separate 'special' day schools. Ultimately it was only the special classes (as they came to be known) that were established, not separate special day schools as well, though the reason is not clear. The necessary legal provision for the establishing of these classes and schools was not made, however, until the 1914 Education Act (section 56) and it was later still (1917) before the first of the classes

was established at the Auckland Normal School. In practical terms, then, the provision was, at first, no more than a token gesture. Moreover, the establishing of further special classes proceeded at a very slow pace causing persistent lobbying by the N.Z.E.I. and the Women Teachers' Association for the next twenty or thirty years.

By the 1920's, then, some official recognition of and provision for the needs of children with the most obvious learning difficulties had occurred. The deaf, the blind, and the mentally defective were recognized as having educational needs the ordinary school was unable to meet. The first milestone in the provision of special education had thus been passed.

LEARNING FAILURE NOT STEMMED BY AMENDED REGULATIONS

Whilst progress had been achieved in respect of the three groups of children just mentioned, the magnitude of the extent of failure in the school system had, in the early years of the new century, been little diminished. As described above, the rigidity of the standards system had been to some extent relaxed by the 1899 regulations, but the expected consequent improvement in the rate of promotion through the standard classes did not follow. Learning failure was clearly continuing, retarding the promotion of many children. In 1918 it was reported, with grave concern, that the highest rate of retardation - 24% - was occurring in Standard 3 (i.e., 24 out of every 100 children enrolled in that Standard class were, at that time, over twelve years of age, the age expected to be typical for that class. In Standard 4, the percentage was 23. (A to J, 1918, E-1, p.22) These rates reflected the extent to which the retardation in the children's earlier school life had accumulated by Standards 3 and 4. In Standards 5 and 6 the rate had fallen, but because many failing children left school after Standard 4.

The extent to which the 1899 regulations would have have been able to reduce effectively the incidence of learning failure obviously depended, in great measure, on the manner in which the teachers observed them. Although many teachers were critical of the standards system the evidence indicates that the teachers as a whole did not enthusiastically avail themselves of the freedom of classification and examination the new regulations gave them. Thus the Hawke's Bay inspectors reported in 1906: 'The discretionary power

that constitutes the real strength of the regulations appears to frighten most teachers who have been so long spoon-fed, and told what to do and what to leave undone, that their own individuality has almost been lost by the lack of use.' (A to J, 1906, E-1B, p.21) This is, perhaps, not to be wondered at after almost thirty years of exposure to the original rigidity of the standards system.

The 1899 regulations notwithstanding, some teachers even doubted the legality of varying or departing from the official school syllabus. Thus, in an article, 'A Plea for an Experimental School' (N.Z.J. Edn, 1912, vol.xiv, no.139, p.35) the writer stated: 'It is illegal to teach children of school age except upon the lines laid down in the syllabus.' However, the view of the Department was: 'Most of the criticism levelled at the syllabus has weight largely owing to the fact that many of our teachers are not sufficiently trained or are not modern enough in their ideas to be able to use the syllabus effectively.' (A to J, 1917, E-1, p.7)

Certainly the teachers were not sufficiently trained to be able to use, effectively and confidently, the degree of freedom they were being given. Although teacher training institutions controlled by Education Boards had been established at Dunedin in 1876 and at Christchurch in 1877 it was not until the Government provided a special annual grant for teacher training in 1878 that Wellington established its institution in 1880, followed by Auckland in 1881. However, relatively few prospective teachers sought preparation in these institutions. And this meagre source of preparation was disrupted when the Government grant was withdrawn in 1888 leading to the closing of the Wellington and Auckland institutions, and the re-organizing of the Christchurch and Dunedin ones. Though a small government grant was restored in 1898 it was not until 1905 that the professional preparation of teachers in Training Colleges began to be adequately organized.

The effects of the lack of professionally trained teachers in the schools were exacerbated by the abuse of the pupil-teacher system that had already operated in the provinces prior to the 1877 Act. Still the most common source of pre-service preparation for teachers, it was an apprentice or indenture system in which adolescent boys and girls received preparation as teachers in the schools in which they served. The head teacher instructed them, out of school hours, though in some instances they were brought together in classes in a centre. It was a cheap way of staffing schools, very

attractive to Boards whose financial resources could not meet the needs. In 1878 there were 450 pupil teachers in the system; twenty years later that number had grown to 1,060. Indeed the staffs of some schools consisted almost entirely of pupil-teachers. Thus, in 1900 the case of an infant school with only two adult teachers but eleven pupil-teachers was reported (A to J, 1900, E-1, p.7) whilst other instances of similar imbalance had been recorded earlier - an Auckland school with nine adult teachers and seventeen pupil-teachers; a Christchurch school, with seven adult teachers and fourteen pupil-teachers.

The abuse of the pupil-teacher system along with the poor professional preparation of many of the adult teachers must have provided much of the reason for the failure to implement the discretionary power the Hawke's Bay inspectors had rightly declared to be the real strength of the 1899 regulations. The bulk of the teaching force was not ready to take the freedom their more progressive colleagues had worked to achieve. Moreover, not all the inspectors were as supportive as the Hawke's Bay inspectors quoted above.

AN AWAKENING OF INTEREST IN CHILD STUDY

The bases for the better provision for the slow and backward learners still languishing in the classrooms of the schools were, nevertheless, being laid in these early years of the new century. Teachers, or the more progressive of them, were beginning to recognize their need for a better education of a psychological and pedagogical nature; and, too, there was a growing awareness that the school curriculum should be child centred rather than subject centred.

As early as January 1900 the N.Z.E.I. council meeting in Timaru had before it this remit from the Palmerston North branch: 'That the University Senate be asked to establish a class of pedagogy.' (N.Z.J. Edn, 1899, vol.I, no.10, p.220) The annual meeting of the Institute in January 1901 resolved: 'That the Institute urge the Council of Victoria College to establish a Chair of Pedagogy.' (N.Z.J. Edn, 1901, vol.II, no.22, p.249) In 1902 the Institute adopted its Education Committee's recommendation that the University Senate be requested to grant C. O. P. [Certificate of Proficiency] to university

graduates who had a year of service in a Normal School and a satisfactory report from the headmaster.

Perhaps more significant, ultimately, was the growing interest in psychology. Thus, J.A. Johnston, M.A., writing in 1903 predicted that the child study to which Sully and Dewey had devoted close attention was '...likely to have far-reaching influence on the methods of teachers.' It would lead to the conclusion that the '...study of the child is really the only basis on which educational systems can be built up.' The 'real teacher' needs to know his subject and '...to know the individual mind he seeks to influence.' Teachers were always in danger of becoming the slave of the curriculum, trying to fit the child into a preconceived course of study. They forget '...that schools are for the children, and not children for the schools.' In conclusion he observed that there was no child-study society in this country and hoped '...that New Zealand will soon come in line with the older lands in doing her share towards the establishment of a science of child development and growth.' (N.Z.J. Edn, 1903, vol.V, no.49, pp.109-111)

Whilst New Zealand did not 'come in line' in this respect the sentiments expressed did not die. In 1906 the president of the N.Z.E.I., in addressing the annual meeting of the Institute, declared that although a student of psychology would not necessarily be a good teacher, a teacher with an intelligent understanding of mental processes would know what were sound methods of teaching and what were 'vicious'. (N.Z.J. Edn, 1906, vol.VII, no.77, p.24)

In 1909 the president of the Otago branch of the N.Z.E.I. questioned whether, in teaching reading, a child should begin to read from the commencement of school. Did not the 'order of mental development point to the desirability of substituting conversation lessons, plastics, pictures, and natural objects?' Moreover, were there not thousands 'so mentally constituted that they cannot be led to solve problems at all, and that thousands can never acquire the power of retaining the mental image of a sufficient number of objects or symbols necessary to enable him to calculate accurately without the aid of visual symbols?' (N.Z.J. Edn, 1909, vol.XI, no.112, pp.80-81)

The educational significance of the findings of experimental psychology were also being described in addresses to N.Z.E.I. branches by Professor T.A. Hunter of Victoria College. Speaking to the Wellington branch in 1909 Hunter described six principles of 'paramount importance in the scheme of education,'

principles derived from the findings of experimental psychology. They were: interest as a determinant of attention; concentration of attention; suggestion; continuity and grading of work; individual differences; importance of feeling and activity. Emphasis was laid on '...the need for the teacher making himself acquainted with the particular type of mind of each pupil, especially the backward pupils, and the different methods of approach to which the different types are susceptible,' (N.Z.J. Edn, 1909, vol. , no.113, p.106)

In addressing the annual meeting of the Institute the following year Professor Hunter stressed the teacher's knowledge of the child as the first condition of success. But, he observed, psychology was not a required study for teachers. 'It is as if in the medical course human anatomy and physiology were excluded. You may not maim or kill the body, however, but apparently the mind does not matter.' Individual differences were so great the class sizes must be adjusted so that teachers can deal with individuals. Moreover the child was not ready for 'systematic mental work till it is seven or eight at least.' 'Child study can reveal the laws that tell us how and when certain knowledge shall be offered.' (N.Z.J. Edn, 1910, vol.XII, no.119, pp.41-44)

In 1915 a regular and anonymous contributor ('Pen-nib') to the N.Z. Journal of Education declared: 'his is the "Children's Age." Thought, care, and money were no longer expended on the capable and strong alone. Indeed 'the weak and feeble' were now better treated in those respects so that in not a few cases the 'lame takes the prey.' The innate prerogative of the child as a child was being recognized, so that all might exert their talents to the full and 'their dormant powers be awakened.' This was both a work of philanthropy and in the national interests.

Along with this interest in the significant of child development for the teacher there began to be criticism of the N.Z.E.I. for its preoccupation with conditions of service. In the executive's report to the 1909 annual meeting it was admitted that: 'The urgent need in the financial and professional conditions of teachers has in the past caused the Educational object of the Institute's work to be somewhat lost sight of...' The 'Educational aspects of the teacher's work' must be included. (N.Z.J. Edn, 1919, vol.X, no.108, p.245) Similar sentiments were expressed in the 1913 presidential address. However the concern with securing better conditions of service was strongly defended on the grounds that until the teachers' economic and service

disabilities were removed they would not be free to devote their full time, and their hearts and souls, to the unique possibilities of their work. (Combs, F.L., N.Z.J. Edn, 1913, vol.XIV, no.154, p.158)

The questioning of the N.Z.E.I. preoccupation with conditions of service, and its relative neglect of the psychological and pedagogical aspects of the teachers' work, indicates the growing awareness among teachers of the significance and importance of psychological and pedagogical matters in their work, and of the neglect of them.

THE ADVERSE EFFECT OF THE GRADING SYSTEM

There was one important respect, however, in which this campaign for the conditions of service was to have an immediate and adverse effect upon the achievement of a child-centred form of education and the better provision for the slow and backward learners. That was in the instituting of a national scheme for the grading of teachers, provided for in the 1914 Act. The Institute had long sought improvement in appointing procedures to ensure that appointments would no longer be subject to what was then known as 'log rolling' (i.e., an applicant canvassing an appointment committee, or similarly using personal influence to secure an appointment) but would be made purely on professional grounds and on a national basis, giving teachers from other districts an equal opportunity with local and already known applicants. The grading scheme devised put all teachers in the country on a list, grading them in a merit order. The merit, or grading, of each teacher was determined by the inspectors' numerical assessment of that teacher, based on their judgment of the teacher in respect of such matters of professional importance as teaching skill, organization of work, discipline, and personality. (See The Grading of Teachers, Special Reports on Educational Subjects, no.12, 1916, Wellington. Also: Nat. Edn, 1920, June 1, Report of the Grading Conference). A teacher's place on the list was determined by the number the inspectors so awarded him. At the same time his position on the list defined his relationship with other teachers and, consequently, appointments could be made, quite easily and simply, by comparing the graded list numbers of the applicants. The applicant with the 'best' graded number was, presumably, the best teacher and so was appointed. Accordingly a teacher's promotion and

career prospects were firmly in the hands of the inspectors.

With amendments, largely concerned with the mechanics of the scheme, the grading system remained in force for almost forty years, being replaced by a new scheme in 1957.

Whilst improving the teachers' conditions of service in some respects, the scheme cannot be said to have encouraged improvement in the education process itself in the schools. Indeed it caused a serious set back. The 1899 and 1914 regulations had diminished the inspectors' role in policing the standards requirements (for the first five standards) and had emphasized their function as advisers. The grading system, however, was now to put the teachers again under the power of the inspectors. In making the inspectors grading officers it destroyed their role of advisers. The two roles were not compatible. So, the former crippling effect of the rigid standards system was now to be replaced by that of the grading system. Both required measurable results; in both the inspectors were the police.

A correspondent, writing under the pseudonym of 'Salary' in National Education in 1920, deplored the effect of the grading scheme. To gain good grading marks a teacher would have to produce results. 'The individuality of the child is not considered. He is merely a machine from whom certain definite mechanical results are to be obtained.' 'Many teachers find that they now lose money because they tried to teach in the true sense of the word. They have not been able, of course, to show the same purely paper results as can be got by drill methods.... To increase grading marks, they must necessarily swing back to the harsh system with its easy attainment of so-called results.' Inspectors must be able to distinguish between '...results that are got from pure sweating of the child, and those that follow from a not undue recognition of the child's individuality.'

Whilst the grading system no doubt did adversely affect, in general, the lot of the slow and backward learners for the reasons just described, it may nevertheless have also contributed in some degree to the achievement of special provision for them. For the thoughts and efforts of teachers who could not earn good grading marks by making a good showing with them probably turned, in many instances, to the need for special provision for them, apart from the regular school classes. Indeed the president of the Southland District Institute, in pleading for such provision, included in his reasons the adverse effect of these children on the teacher's position in the graded

list and on his chances of future promotion. (N.Z.J. Edn, vol.XIX, no.194, p.192) The main reasons, however, lay elsewhere.

As the above account has indicated, a primary reason for the failure to make provision for the slow and backward learners was the persistence, from the earliest days of the national system, of the belief of the education officials that the remedy was to be found in school organization. The admittedly serious degree of retardation could be remedied, it was argued, by better organization which would result in more rapid promotion of the pupils. The failure of the attempts to achieve that, especially through tinkering with the standards system and the syllabus of instruction, we have already noted. It was not until attention came to be focused on the children themselves, rather than on the way the school system was organized, that real progress was made.

The teachers, however, had not overlooked the significant relationship between over large classes and learning failure.

OVER LARGE CLASSES AND MASS INSTRUCTION

By 1918 the existence of, and the learning problems caused by, over large classes had been widely publicised. The Government, while admitting the seriousness of the situation and promising to remedy it, had nevertheless done little to improve it. The Minister (Hon. J.A. Hannan) reacted angrily to a deputation on the matter from the N.Z.E.I. executive. He complained of 'the reckless exaggeration, the wilful suppression and the gross inaccuracy indulged in by some irresponsible critics' of the size of classes. (N.Z.J. Edn, 1918, vol.XX, no.200, p.61) Less than 10% of the children were in classes over 60, and a quarter of that 10% were in classes over 70. Why then, he asked, the persistent reference to classes of 70 and 80 which, after all, contained less than 3% of the children? Classes were not as small as they should be, but why ignore progress being made?

The Minister's reaction no doubt indicated the extent of his frustration, knowing he would be unable to provide for the increased expenditure that would inevitably follow the reduction of class sizes, through increased needs for accommodation and teachers.

However, the concern about large classes and the resulting mass

instruction was spreading outside the ranks of the teachers. In 1920 the member for Palmerston North (Mr J.A. Nash) raised the matter in Parliament. He asked the Minister if any steps were being taken to relieve teachers of the hardship imposed on them in controlling large classes. (Note, it was the interests of the teachers, rather than of the pupils, that he advanced). He declared that in one education district alone there were 71 classes with 60 to 70 pupils each; 56 with 70 to 80; 30 with 80 to 90; 14 with 90 to 100; and 7 with 100 to 120. Claiming that no matter had caused him more anxiety and concern since taking office the Minister replied that since the cure lay with more teachers the Department was considering trying to double the average number of entrants to the teaching profession in the next new year. Whilst entrants were sufficiently paid, the salary problem came at later stages. Accordingly the question of reasonable salary for 'these probationary teachers' and the whole profession was before Cabinet. (N.Z.P.D., 1920, vol.186, p.19)

That the health, and consequently the efficiency, of teachers with large classes was being seriously affected was receiving publicity. In 1920 the executive of the Wellington branch of the N.Z.E.I. reported on the case of a woman teacher 'who had broken down completely under the strain of teaching a class of 87 children.' She had applied for relief from the Institute's Provident Fund. (Nat. Edn., 1920, vol.2, no.17, p.252)

In the same year the Minister was under pressure at the N.Z. School Committees' Association conference. He revealed that in some city schools there were classes of 130 to 140. He hoped to get classes down to 40, and amongst the means would be temporary teachers given a course of four or five months to get them ready for the new year. (loc.cit., p.252)

The public airing of what was coming to be regarded as a scandalous situation continued. Thus, in 1924 the Otago Daily Times complained that 'the size of the classes that one teacher is expected to instruct renders it generally impossible that the pupils should receive the individual attention that is no doubt desirable.' In words that must have been as salt in the Minister's wound it characterized the reducing of class sizes as having been 'a pious objective of the Education Department for many years, and still is such.' (Quoted in Nat.Edn, 1924, vol.VI, no.63, p.338)

To give but one further indication of public opinion and concern, an editorial from the Auckland Sun may be cited. Claiming that 'hundreds of

classes of 40 and 50 pupils' still existed it observed: 'Teaching often resolves itself into a problem of discipline and mass instruction.' The Minister had estimated the cost of providing the extra accommodation needed for smaller classes would be about (pound sign) 70,000, and that of the extra teachers might be as much or twice as much. But, it claimed: '...it is cheaper to build a really modern classroom than to build the old type of educational tomb.' (!!) Furthermore, 'we must give up thinking of expenditure on education as an unreal investment, grudging it and stinting it in consequence, so robbing the nation of the results of what is, in the long run, its most practical investment - perhaps its only practical investment.' (Quoted in Nat. Edn, 1928, vol.X, no.105, p.292)

However the Government continued to consider that the cost would put the reducing of class sizes in any degree out of the question. In 1930 the N.Z.E.I. secretary (H.A. Parkinson) informed the annual meeting that in respect of 250 schools there were 99 classes composed of up to 30 children each; 439 with 31 to 40 each; 814 with 41 to 50 each; 590 with 51 to 60 each; and 37 with more than 60. Whether this sample was representative or not, the fact remains that apart from the children in the 99 smallest classes the rest would have had very little opportunity for the individual attention they would have needed if they had been slow or backward learners.

THE SLOW DEVELOPMENT OF 'SPECIAL' EDUCATION

Whilst teachers maintained that over large classes and mass instruction were the causes of the retardation resulting from learning failure, they recognized that other causes existed. Amongst these was the lack of the ability of some children to cope with the school syllabus. As noted above, special provision had already been made for the educating of children of low mental ability (the mentally defective) in residential institutions and in 'special' classes in the regular primary schools. The development of these provisions, however, was extraordinarily slow, the first special class being opened in Auckland in 1917, the second in Wellington in 1919, the third in Christchurch in 1921, each attached to its local Teachers' Training College. The fourth, also opened in 1921, was the first to be sited in a school, the Victoria Avenue school in Wanganui.

Year after year the N.Z.E.I. and the W.T.A. vainly urged the Department to establish more of these classes as provided for in the regulations. The Department, however, explained its tardiness in establishing these classes as due to having no legislative authority (until 1917) for the salaries of the special class teachers, and to the shortage of suitable teachers. Nevertheless, by 1923, when Miss W.A. Valentine was appointed Supervisor of Special Classes, only seven such classes had been established.

The more rapid provision of special classes would no doubt have reduced the number of children in primary school classes who were not making normal progress and were failing seriously in learning. However, teachers and others, were becoming aware that not all serious learning failure was due to lack of mental ability. So, yet another means of providing for the special needs of slow and backward learners came to be promoted.

THE INTELLIGENT NON-INTELLECTUALS

Thus the 'academic' nature and purpose of the school syllabus, and of the methods of teaching, came to be considered a major source of learning failure that was still occurring in a substantial section of the school population. It was not that these children were mentally defective or even of sub-normal intelligence, it was claimed. Some, indeed, were of superior intelligence. Their failure was due to the curriculum being too 'academic' for them. Their interests were of a non-intellectual and non-academic character; hence the term used to describe them, the 'intelligent non-intellectual.' The remedy for them was to amend the school syllabus to provide a predominance of manual and domestic training.

Such a view was expressed by 'Pen-nib' in his column in the N.Z. Journal of Education in 1915. (Vol.XVII, no.170, p.55) 'What are backward children? What is the quality of mind or disposition that makes a child backward?' he asked. 'Sometimes backwardness is merely slowness,' he replied. 'It is not a lack of intelligence, but a lack of alertness. It may be a chronic sluggishness of the nervous system.'

The chief proponents were, however, the W.T.A. and the N.Z.E.I. A tireless advocate was Miss E.A. Chaplin who, in her presidential address to the W.T.A. in 1920 (Nat. Edn, 1920, vol.2, no.12, p.43) distinguished the slow

and backward learners from the imbecile and feebleminded, describing the former as '...another large group who may be classed as sub-normal, who muddle along in our schools from day to day, deriving very little benefit from instruction given. The classes, particularly in the city schools, are too large to allow of these children receiving sufficient individual attention. Their mental powers are slow of development, and if sufficient time and care were taken, many of them would reach the level of the average child. Some of them are gifted with manual dexterity above the normal, and if our system would allow them to be grouped from about the age of nine - or even younger - into smaller classes under special teachers, incalculable good would be done. As things are, they are the dunces of their class, and find school a very unkindly place. The worst feature, however, is the result of this policy on the children, for there is nothing so paralysing in its effect on the spirit of the child as the consciousness of an inferiority which repeated efforts on his part fail to remove.' She estimated there were about five thousand such 'misfits' in the schools, and deplored the failure of her own association and the N.Z.E.I. to secure practical results to their resolutions to find a remedy.

Sympathetic views were expressed by the Minister (Hon. C.J. Parr) in addressing the Council of Education about that time. Distinguishing the dull from the feebleminded, he considered the numbers of the dull to be largely responsible for what he called retardation. 'The problem was one that occurred in every school in New Zealand. The obvious remedy was to have special classes in every school under the control of special teachers. It was hoped that a step would be made in this direction during the next school year.' (Nat. Edn, 1921, vol.2, no.18, p.296) After discussion the Council resolved: 'That in the opinion of the Council it is urgent that special classes should be established in all the larger schools for the better education of children of retarded mental development.'

Whilst stating that the Department recognized the need for special classes the Director of Education (Dr Anderson) expressed some reservations - the stigma of attending such classes; the considerable difficulties in respect of accommodation and staffing; and the fact that other reasons than sub-normal mental capacity, such as irregular attendance, frequent changes of school, unsatisfactory home conditions. The Assistant Director (Mr J. Caughley) declared that 'in merely a small proportion of cases was the retardation due

to lack of mental capacity.' He produced statistics to show that about 5,000 of the 24,000 children in Standard 3 were backward but not all could be mentally defective. There should be investigation of the cause and remedies of retardation, most retarded children not being backward.

In the same year (1920) the annual meeting of the N.Z.E.I. unanimously adopted the resolution: 'That a committee be set up to consider and report on retardation and backwardness in the primary schools of the Dominion, the report to be presented at the next annual conference.' A committee was formed but its report was most severely criticized when presented the following year. (Nat. Edn, 1921, vol.3, no.22, p.xii) One critic declared: 'Retardation actually referred to the children of quick intelligence who had been kept back. These should be the subject of investigation - not those who had been the object of the Committee's enquiry.' It was resolved: 'That the report be referred back to the Committee with instructions to ascertain how and to what extent retardation was due to (a) insufficient and poor accommodation, (b) incompetent teaching, and (c) excessively large classes.' (loc. cit., p.xiii)

The report was discussed, however, at a conference of inspectors, Training College Principals, representative teachers and Departmental officers called by the Minister 'to discuss various matters affecting the practical side of education in New Zealand.' (Nat. Edn, 1921, vol.3, no.24, p.104)

In the course of a long discussion on retardation at that conference MP J.S. Tennant reported on an instructive study at Wellington Training College. 'About fifty backward children were subjected to intelligence tests. Only two were really mentally deficient, two proved super-efficient, ten were above average intelligence. The reason for backwardness was not low mental equipment; indeed, that was probably the least important factor. Home conditions were a very important factor. The teaching and class arrangements were really the determining factors. Many schools did use individual promotions, and this helped to abolish retardation.' (loc. cit., p.109) Winding up the discussion the Minister 'concluded that the Department must now begin the work of investigation through the training colleges. He proposed a standing committee to deal with the question and to report to the next annual conference the result of their reading and their inquiries.' Apparently the committee was unable to proceed, an obstacle being the time the application of the Terman revision of the Binet Scale (an individual test) took. Mr F.G. Gibbs, a member of the committee, wrote to National Education (1922, vol.4,

no.38, p.218) explaining this, and informing readers that he had copies of a recently published group test (the National Intelligence Test) set up by a Nelson printer who would supply 100 copies with instructions for six shillings pre-paid. Those using the test were asked to send the results to the writer.

A few months earlier Gibbs had published a well researched statement on retardation in National Education (1921, vol.3, no.28, p.256). Drawing on the findings of Burt, Hollingworth, Terman, Whipple, Ballard and Rugg, he reviewed the research since it had begun some twelve or thirteen years before, and identified six of its chief results: if a class is to be homogeneous in school ability it must be heterogeneous in age, so the 'lockstep' doctrine of classification was wrong; if promoted beyond their ability children are injured mentally and morally, and daily experience failure; whilst 'pushing on our dull children rather too fast, we have been committing a much more grievous error in keeping our bright children back' - the non-acceleration of the bright was the really serious retardation problem, not the too great retardation of the dull; a careful stocktaking of a child's mental and moral equipment through standardized achievement and intelligence tests would provide better methods of classifying pupils; the 'cast-iron' rigidity of the education system, especially the lock-step promotion system must be rendered more flexible; the work of the classes should be differentiated 'to suit the various types of mind' e.g., more manual training and concrete methods for the dull child. Continuing his statement in the next issue of National Education Gibbs pointed out that '...the teachers are practically debarred from experimenting with some of the most promising of these methods, for the regulations regarding work books, schemes of work, and periodical examinations, ever becoming more and more onerous, press heavily enough even on the teacher who endeavours to keep the whole of his class moving at a uniform rate in the bad old-fashioned lockstep style.' Varying work according to the ability of the pupils would increase enormously the clerical work to be undertaken. (1921, vol.3, no.29, p.299)

Addressing the annual meeting of the N.Z.E.I. the following year, 1922, the Minister (Hon. C.J. Parr) expressed in strong if homely terms sympathetic views on the need to provide for the slow and backward learners. (Nat. Edn, 1922, vol.4, no.37, p.145) Forty percent of children dropped out before completing the primary school course, 'and ultimately become the prey of loud-mouthed demagogues who hold forth at street corners.' That forty percent

included 'the so-called "stupid boy" who often later surpassed his fellows in life qualities.' 'They had a duty to perform with regard to that so-called "stupid boy" - they were not doing it to-day. They knew that. They had to develop him, build his self-respect, get rid of all these misfits and failures.' And later he commented: 'The old, old idea of classroom government, of mass teaching and mass discipline, of lecturing the children instead of teaching them was going.' 'The dull boy should get more time for his work. The teacher should be his friend. These were the fundamental ideas, but there was strong conservative opposition. He himself considered that these ideas were perfectly sound, and would like to see the experiment tried.'

At the annual conference of the W.T.A. that year it was again resolved: 'That the time has arrived when the interests of the intelligent non-intellectual type of children in our primary schools should receive special consideration with a view to such receiving greater benefits from the primary schools, and more adequate training for satisfactory future citizenship.' The seconder of the motion reported that of fourteen such children half had since come under police supervision. (Nat. Edn, vol.4, no.38, p.225)

In 1923 the report on the 'Intelligent Non-Intellectuals' was presented to the N.Z.E.I. annual meeting. In introducing it Miss Newton emphasized that the report did not refer to what she called 'the backward or mentally deficient' but to 'the intelligent child who was not, in an academic sense, quick, whose aptitude led him rather to handicraft methods, who preferred to "learn by doing."' (N.Z.E.I. Report of 40th Annual Meeting, 1923, p.43 et seq.) In the report itself the non-intellectual were defined as '...those children who are not likely to profit from the academic side of our present school system much beyond Standard 4, but who are sufficiently intelligent to benefit from a specialised or more elastic educational system in which manual and domestic training predominates.'

These children had not been as well endowed with the keen perceptive faculties and with the average will-power on which concentration depends. Without the individual attention they need they lag behind, becoming disheartened and losing interest as younger children pass them, mental stagnation setting in. The remedy suggested was to take the L.C.C. 'Leaving-age Classes' as models. On nearing the leaving age (14 years) these children could then be grouped together in these classes and concentrate on subjects

essential to their prospective life needs, working in the Dalton plan spirit and without a common standard of attainment. Studies should be practical and linked to prospective life needs, e.g., arithmetic for girls should be linked to domestic activities (weighing, measuring, prices of goods etc.) and for boys to branches of handwork (sizes, weights, lengths, shapes etc.). The classes must not be too large to preclude individual attention, and the teacher should have special qualifications including enthusiasm, sympathy, and a knowledge of child psychology. Furthermore, the Department should engage a psychiatrist who would visit the different classes to advise the lines along which each pupil should be trained.

After discussion the report was adopted and it was resolved to send it to the Department with the request 'that it be treated as a matter of urgency'. However, when the N.Z.E.I. executive mentioned the report to the Minister during an interview soon after, he was not encouraging. While admitting the problem was serious: 'He could not conceal his opinion that the large number of retardates owed their backwardness to being kept too long in the infant classes. He had been amazed at the length of time some of them had spent in this department of the school.' 'Children were too late in arriving at Standard 6.' He then moved to another topic. This was an abrupt departure from his forthright and supportive comments at the opening of the N.Z.E.I. conference in the previous year.

DEPARTMENTAL ACTION - SURVEYS, AND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

The Minister's changed attitude was no doubt due to ever recurrent financial considerations. His Department, however, was securing and disseminating evidence demonstrating the wide range of ability that would be found in a typical school class, thereby supporting the growing conviction that teaching should be more child and individual centred. Thus, the Department had, in 1924, a thirty-minute Terman group test of mental ability administered to all the eight and a half thousand entrants to secondary schools. Amongst its results was evidence that the youngest pupils scored better than the oldest. What, it was asked in the ensuing report, was the remedy? Should there be quicker promotion of the 'young brights,' or should special provision be made for them in a special division of the class where they could be given 'an

enriched curriculum'? (N.Z. Edn Department, Terman Group Test of Mental Ability, 1924, Wellington).

The officer most prominent in the Department's surveys and in publicly disseminating and interpreting their results was an inspector, N.R. McKenzie who had been on exchange in Canada and the U.S.A. Commenting in 1924 to the N.Z.E.I. Wellington branch on that visit, he declared the Dominion had fallen sadly behind in the care of the 'exceptional children' who formed forty to fifty per cent of the country's children --- the very bright, the very slow, the mentally or physically defective. 'Every child who deviates widely from the normal requires a special type of education. Here it is that our system largely fails.' There were special schools for the blind and the deaf; the delinquent were not overlooked; the exceptional children, though, had too often been neglected. Scientific tests of mental ability were widely used overseas 'to serve as a partial guide in the classification of pupils, the determination of the size of classes, and the selection of pupils who deviate in a marked degree from the normal type.' The teacher's attention is diverted from the subject matter to the children's needs. (Nat. Edn, 1924, vol.6, no.63, p.334 et seq.)

Later, when senior inspector in Taranaki, McKenzie enlisted the help of his teachers to make two separate surveys of the intelligence and scholastic achievement of the eight thousand odd primary school children in the education board district. The results were wide ranging in nature and of undoubted importance. For our purposes the most significant was the demonstration of the fact that in almost all the school classes the ability and capacity of the children ranged from 'mental deficiency to genius.' Relating this finding to the still robust convention that all pupils in a class were of equal ability and ready to deal with the same standard of work, the report concluded: 'The time is more than ripe for a more scientific classification, more elastic courses of instruction, and methods of teaching suited to the needs of children of varying gifts and limitations.' (School Surveys, 1927 and 1928, North and South Taranaki Branches of the N.Z.E.I., Taranaki Education District, Hawera, 1930).

Further support for the recognition of, and provision for, the differing abilities and needs of children came from yet another source. As early as 1904, but again in more detail in 1907, an Auckland inspector, E.C. Purdie, had proposed at national conferences of inspectors and teachers the

establishing of central schools, in appropriate areas, to be attended by all pupils in Standard 3 and above in those areas. (See Watson, J.E., Intermediate Schooling in New Zealand, Wellington, N.Z.C.E.R., 1964, p.16 et seq.). Amongst the advantages he saw was the opportunity to group pupils by ability, and to modify the curriculum to provide for the varying aptitudes of pupils. With an eye on the administrators and politicians he also produced evidence showing that not only would efficiency be improved but economy would be effected. The proposal appealed to others for quite a different reason - as a means of bridging the chasm between primary and secondary schools.

It was not until 1922, however, that such a proposal was adopted and the necessary reorganization occurred. Modelled on the American Junior High School the new schools straddled the last two years of the primary school and the first of the secondary and the technical. For a variety of reasons (loc. cit., pp.41-42) few of these junior high schools were established until in 1932 the three year course was reduced to the last two of the primary school, and the name was changed to 'intermediate school or department.' Classification of pupils in these schools tended to be on recommendations from the principals of the contributing primary schools together with the results of tests of intelligence and of scholastic attainment, at first standardized overseas.

The establishing of the junior high schools, with their classification of pupils by ability, and the differentiation of their school programmes was, then, an official recognition of the need to provide for individual differences.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE UNIVERSITIES

The grounds for the wider and more effective provision for the special needs of the slow and backward learners had been well prepared. Hard evidence of the need had been gathered from the Department's own surveys and similar sources. The example set by oversea countries could not continue to be overlooked especially when graphically and widely described by returning respected educationists such as N.R. McKenzie and J.S. Tennant. The professional development of the teachers was manifesting itself in several ways, including a growing interest in, and awareness of the significance of

the study of psychology. The vigorous and persistent lobbying of the N.Z.E.I. and the W.T.A. was countering the hesitantcy and tardiness of the Department hampered by financial considerations and its traditional preoccupation with administration. Why, then, was progress still not made for some time?

The main reason seems to have been that, well informed though departmental officers, teachers, and other interested parties were of relevant thinking and development overseas, very little was yet known anywhere about the nature and the causes, let alone the remedying of learning difficulties as we understand them to-day. It was the university colleges' departments of Education and of Psychology which became the main agents, at first, of the dissemination of this knowledge as it became available. Through the clinics they established in the 1920's and 1930's for the diagnosis, assessment, and guidance of children with mental, educational, and behavioural problems, they not only demonstrated that successful remedial methods existed, but also proved to be the forerunners of the Psychological Service later to be established, and to some extent modelled on them, by the Department of Education. Importantly the university clinics operated in close association both with the schools and the parents, thereby exerting an educational influence much wider than would otherwise have occurred.

Knowledge of the growing body of information about learning difficulties was also being disseminated by the universities through their lecture courses for credit towards the B.A., and M.A., degrees and the Diploma in Education. Of the two B.A. Stage I or first year courses in Education one was concerned with child development. Of the three courses required for Stage II Education, one called Educational Psychology was concerned chiefly with the study of learning, whilst another was called Experimental Pedagogy, a laboratory or practical course related to the theory of the Educational Psychology course. The three stage III, or final year, courses included one concerned with maladjustment, in which consideration was given to scholastic backwardness and emotional and behavioural problems.

Clearly the courses were of great significance at the time, particularly as they were attended by practising teachers, and officers of the Department and the Boards. The studies required in these courses included the findings of Sir Cyril Burt reported in his two-volume study of The Sub-Normal Child - the child in trouble with the law (The Young Delinquent, University of London Press 1925) and the child in trouble over learning failure (The Backward

Child, University of London Press 1937). The pertinence of the latter study, and the reason it made such a strong impact, is best explained in Burt's own statement of its purpose: '...to keep in view a double aim, and to be at once scientific and practical.' 'How to distinguish the backward from the normal, what to do with them when discovered, how to classify, treat, and train them - these are questions that teachers are continually asking, and they are questions that are bound to arise under any scheme of universal education. But the practical difficulties cannot be solved until certain preliminary points, of a more theoretical nature have first of all been settled: what is meant by backwardness, what forms does it take, how far can the different forms be cured, and, above all, what are its predominant causes.' (p.V). This was precisely what was recognized to be needed on the New Zealand scene.

It was not long before Schonell developed Burt's work, particularly in respect of disabilities in specific basic subjects - reading, arithmetic, spelling, oral and written English (Backwardness in the Basic Subjects, Oliver & Boyd, Edinburgh, 1942).

Of the many important outcomes of Burt's and of Schonell's work, two were particularly important at the time: firstly their convincing demonstration that there are many and varied forms of learning failure; and, secondly, their demonstration not only of the need for the careful qualitative definition of those differing forms, but also of the equally careful quantitative and objective definition of them. Dullness, backwardness (general or specific; remedial or irremedial), and retardation were forms of learning failure distinguished and defined, in sharp contrast to the imprecise use of these and of similar terms that had confused so long the efforts of those seeking provision for children not making normal progress in learning.

The emphasis Burt and Schonell placed on the quantitative and objective definition of the various forms of learning disability made the development and use of measuring tools for that purpose necessary. Burt, during his work as psychologist for the London County Council Department of Education, had published his handbook of psychological and educational measurement entitled Mental and Scholastic Tests (1921). Schonell followed later with a wide range of diagnostic tests in the basic school subjects.

Here, in New Zealand, these tests along with intelligence tests were at first widely used regardless of the fact that they had not been standardized here and, consequently, were not relevant to New Zealand conditions. To

overcome this difficulty the N.Z.C.E.R. standardized for use in New Zealand four Australian Council for Educational Research (A.C.E.R.) Reading tests and four Arithmetic tests; and made possible the construction and standardization of an Oral Word Reading Test intended to be a New Zealand substitute for Burt's Word Recognition Test, and the preparation and publication of a handbook, How to Conduct A Reading Survey (Fieldhouse, A.E., NZCER, 1957). Consequently, for the first time, objectively determined 'standards' of attainment in New Zealand were available, and it was possible to speak with a reasonable degree of certainty of what constituted backwardness so far as typical New Zealand achievement was concerned. The N.Z.C.E.R. standardization of the Otis test provided a means of estimating intelligence, though its use was somewhat limited in cases of learning failure since it involved silent reading. Accordingly, for those trained in the administration and interpretation of an individual intelligence test the New Zealand standardization of the Stanford Binet Scale was prepared and published by the N.Z.C.E.R.

Thus the necessary measuring instruments for the application of the findings of Burt and Schonell had been made available by the N.Z.C.E.R. Along with the universities, then, the N.Z.C.E.R. made a significant and timely contribution in securing the advances in providing for the needs of backward and retarded children.

The events just outlined were significant for a further reason. Up to now the teachers had been groping, somewhat blindly, in their attempts to secure within the system some provision for the educationally slow and backward. Now, as has just been described, the scientific evidence and the technical means existed that justified such provision. Accordingly efforts to secure it could be more effectively directed and more convincingly based.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN GOVERNMENT POLICY

Fortunately a more sympathetic and favourable government attitude had begun to prevail about this time, caused not only by an improvement in the country's economic circumstances but also by the philosophy of the Minister of Education, the Hon. P. Fraser. In 1937 the 'proficiency' examination (the Standard 6 leaving certificate and secondary education entrance examination)

was abolished. So the primary school teachers were freed from the constraints of the last of the external 'standards' examinations (required since 1878) and, in theory at least, were in a position to consider the individual needs of their pupils. As in the past, however, the teachers were slow to abandon their familiar and long established practices. Furthermore, the discouraging effects of the grading system remained.

In 1939 Fraser stated, clearly and specifically, that there must be recognition of and provision for the particular educational needs of all children whatever their mental, physical, and economic condition. 'The Government's objective, broadly expressed, is that every person, whatever his level of academic ability, whether he be rich or poor, whether he live in town or country has a right, as a citizen, to a free education of the kind for which he is best fitted and to the fullest of his powers.' And again : 'Schools that are to cater for the whole population must offer courses that are as rich and varied as are the needs and abilities of the children who enter them.' (A to J, 1939, E-1, pp.2-3)

THE RIGHTS OF THE SLOW AND BACKWARD LEARNER

These statements immeasurably strengthened the case for help for the educationally backward and retarded children, introducing a relatively new dimension, namely, the right of every child, regardless of the nature of his ability and of his economic status, to the education not only best suited to him but also to the fullest extent of his powers. Previously the case had been advanced chiefly, though not entirely, on economic and on national interest grounds - that better provision for the educationally backward and retarded should be made to ensure they could eventually earn their living and so would not be a burden on the State, and in order that the achievement of bright children should not be jeopardized by the retarding effect of their slower classmates, which was clearly not in the national interests. When the children themselves had been mentioned it had been not in terms of their rights but rather in respect of the discouraging and depressing effects upon them of their continued failure arising from lack of suitable provision.

By contrast, Fraser's statements made the child himself the matter of immediate and over-riding concern, not economic and nation interests. Every

child had an inalienable right to the type of education best suited to him. No doubt economic and national interests would be best served by this means. Nevertheless the child, his welfare and his rights, were to be the dominating and determining criteria. So a particularly powerful argument for providing for the needs of the educationally backward and retarded was to hand.

Unfortunately Fraser found he had inherited a crippling backlog of school building maintenance and replacement, making the immediate and full implementation of his policy impossible. However, the way had been effectively prepared for the developments that ultimately occurred, a way that was no doubt eased later by the appointment of a Director of Education who was particularly understanding of and sympathetic to the needs of the disadvantaged, Dr C.E. Beeby.

THE POLICY ADOPTED

With relatively few exceptions the policy that eventually developed has been to keep the educationally backward and retarded within the ordinary schools, providing there for their needs rather than in separate institutions. Thus, for the children backward in specific subjects, especially reading, schools were at first encouraged to establish 'opportunity' or 'adjustment' classes in which they received special individual teaching in their weak subject, returning to their regular classroom for the rest of their education. It was found, however, that many of the children required more specialized help than the teachers in such classes were able to give. Accordingly Reading Clinics were established, each attached to a primary school in the district served. Experience soon showed, however, that not only would an inordinate number of such clinics be needed but that, in effect, they were acting as an ambulance at the bottom of a cliff. Preventive measures were needed. Regular classroom teachers needed to be better equipped to deal in their own classrooms with incipient reading failure. Indeed a step had already been made by the appointment of a national Reading Adviser (Miss R. Trevor) to undertake in-service courses and to prepare suitable resource material. Before long this service was extended through the appointment of Reading Advisers in the Education Board districts. Further assistance to the schools was provided through the appointment of a few itinerant reading teachers and some part-time

teachers of reading. As well, the school inspectors and the Advisers to Junior Classes were available to give advice and assistance.

Whilst it was seen to be important to help teachers to deal with reading failure in their own classrooms, at least in the incipient and early stages, it was recognized that the prevention of it was of even greater importance. As well as programmes to help teachers improve their teaching of the early stages of reading, a scientifically constructed series of reading instruction booklets, or primers, was prepared and issued to all schools along with a teacher's handbook; and introductory courses for teachers were offered.

NEW KINDS OF SPECIAL CLASSES

Other kinds of learning need began also to be met. As recorded above the deaf and blind were to some extent provided for already in separate special schools. To complement this facility at a local level special classes for partially-sighted children and for the deaf were established. Furthermore the needs of children with speech and language difficulties were not overlooked, special classes and speech clinics being provided. As well, residential schools and special classes were to become available for maladjusted children to provide the particular help they needed, whilst a service for housebound children with a variety of special learning needs was made available by the Department of Education's Correspondence School.

Two further developments merit mention. Whilst the above provisions have related chiefly to primary schools, special classes for the backward, deaf, and visually handicapped pupils in the secondary schools began in the 1960's. At the other end of the age range children who are born with hearing defects, and who will need to be educated in a special school or class for the deaf, are identified so that any hearing they have may be retained, their parents can be advised, and they can be placed in due course in special classes attached to a play centre or kindergarten. Indeed the early detection of, and intervention in, cases of identifiable potential learning difficulty, along with the providing of a multidisciplinary programme, marks recent developments in providing for learning difficulties.

SUPPORT SERVICES FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION FACILITIES

As might be expected, the wide range and the numbers of the special facilities just described require extensive support services, a fact often overlooked by critics. Teacher education and the Department of Education's Psychological Services are, perhaps, the most important of these. Teacher education is provided through the basic pre-service courses and more specialist courses (e.g., in speech therapy, special education) at Teachers' Colleges, through continuing education and in-service courses for practising teachers, through diploma credits by correspondence courses from the Advanced Studies for Teachers Unit of the Department of Education, and through extra-mural and internal university study. Accordingly the facilities for teacher education have been greatly extended so far as the educating of children with particular learning problems are concerned.

The Psychological Service, too, has grown rapidly for the same reason. Inevitably the providing of more, and of highly, specialized educational facilities has increased the need for the support the Service can give. However it should not be overlooked that the Service has a preventive function also through its consultant and advisory work with teachers dealing with learning difficulties in the regular classrooms.

A further support service is provided by the visiting teachers, a service which originated after the Second World War when it was considered that the consequences of the disruption of home life, in particular, were leading to learning failure and behaviour problems in the schools. The effectiveness of the service has led to its continuation and development.

Although the above account is brief and but a general outline of the main features of the development of the provision, within the State system, for children with learning difficulties, it indicates a substantial and growing recognition of the need for such provision. The obstacles to that provision since the national system began in 1878 have been numerous and varied. The enormous task of establishing the system on a financial shoe-string; the preoccupation of the Department of Education, at first, with administrative rather than professional matters; the development of teaching as a profession; the lack of an understanding of the nature, causes, and remedying of learning difficulties; the little concern for the rights of minority groups; these are some of the obstacles identified above.

That all obstacles have not been overcome and that the need is not yet fully met would be freely admitted by many, if not all, involved whether as provider or consumer. Whilst the chief protagonists were, originally, the teachers, they have recently been joined by interested lay groups, mainly of parents whose children have learning difficulties for which they consider adequate provision has not yet been made. Such a group, which persuaded the Minister of Education to commission a research study by the N.Z.C.E.R., is the Specific Learning Difficulties Association (SPELD).

Certainly provision has not been made for some of the very complicated and so far intractable learning difficulties of some otherwise normal children, for which difficulties research has still to supply validated diagnostic and remedial techniques. When that occurs, and such validated means are available, it is to be hoped that government policy will still recognize that it is the right of every child to have the kind of education best suited to his needs, and to have it to the fullest extent of which he is capable.